

asked around. I have been on TV, I have invited folks to let me know. Oh, no, Viagra is fine; birth control is not fine. Just put the pieces together yourself. I think this decision discriminates against women, and in the slippery slope argument you are going to see it affect everyone. And we need to listen to the women who rely on birth control to improve their health and the health of their families. Let me tell you a few stories. Raquel from Sacramento was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in 2010. After her treatment her doctors told her she needed to use birth control to ensure she did not become pregnant for the next 3 years because she was really sick. Luckily, her employer covers birth control and now, happily, 4 years later she is pregnant with her first child. What could have happened to her if she had gone through an unintended pregnancy? It could have been pretty devastating. What if she had worked for a different employer who refused to offer her that birth control? Her health and the health of her child would have been at risk and that would have been tragic. So let's listen to her.

Let's listen to Katherine from Pleasant Hill, CA, who relies on birth control after having her first child.

Both my husband and I want to be the best possible parents for our son, and having another child so soon would hurt our ability to do that. A variety of affordable birth control options are crucial for me and for all first-time moms like me!

Many years ago I was on the board of Planned Parenthood, and what we said all the time was that our dream was that every child be a wanted child—a wanted child. As a parent myself and as a grandparent I tell you right now it takes a lot to raise a child. Hillary Clinton said it takes a village. It certainly takes loving parents, and it takes a loving family. It certainly costs money, and it certainly takes energy.

We want our families to be healthy. We want our families to be productive, and birth control is a success story. It breaks my heart that women just like Katherine who work at Hobby Lobby and other for-profit corporations now could be denied access to affordable health care unless we fix this.

The Religious Freedom Restoration Act was not about giving your boss the power over you like this. It was about giving you the right to make your own choices and decisions. We need to listen to women like Ariana in Redding, CA, who wrote:

I am a recent college graduate trying to make ends meet and pay off my student loans. It is a great relief to know I can get the birth control I need without a copay.

These are real stories. If the boss doesn't like that you choose birth control, that is his right. If he wants to sit down with his daughter and tell her his religious objection, and if she agrees with him, that is fine. I mean, that is what America is about. But don't take your religious beliefs, your ideology,

your biases, your prejudices, and your opinions and foist them on your employees. That is not this country. That is not what we are about.

Shouldn't we care more about the rights of women and their families than the rights of a few employers who can exercise that in their families? This bill we are going to vote on is critical, and I hope it won't die as a result of partisanship. We have to rise above partisanship around here.

"Equal justice under law"—that is what it says over the portico. And frankly, there is another issue. If you look at what has happened to the rates of abortion since we have seen more use of birth control, they are going down. There has been a study in one of our Nation's big cities that proved that because there was broad use of birth control, abortions went down by 50 percent. Imagine. So if that is our concern regardless of whether we are pro-choice or not, we shouldn't be embracing decisions that make it more difficult for women to get access to birth control.

So equal justice under the law doesn't say: "except for women." It doesn't say: "except if my boss disagrees with me." It is pretty beautiful. It is pretty clear. It is something that we have to respect. It is for the ages, and tomorrow we are going to see if our colleagues agree. Every Senator must take a stand tomorrow for individual liberty. When we vote tomorrow, let's be reminded: Women are watching. The American people will hold each of us accountable if we fail to protect their rights and their ability to decide what is best for their families.

I have been around a while. I was around when one of the Bushes was actually on the board of Planned Parenthood—George Herbert Walker Bush. Suddenly this issue is back—birth control—and suddenly we are arguing over it again.

So I say this. I may be wearing a white jacket, but it is not a white doctor's coat. I am not a doctor, and I don't want to put myself, as a politician, in between a woman and her doctor or in between a family and their doctor. Let's leave important health care choices where they belong: with women, with families, with doctors, and not with politicians, in the Senate or Justices sitting in a courtroom.

Thank you very much. I yield the floor.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). The Senator from North Carolina.

Mrs. HAGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that if cloture is invoked on either the Bay or LaFleur nomination the confirmation vote or votes occur at 3:15 p.m. with all other provisions of the previous order remaining in effect.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the request?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

PROTECT WOMEN'S HEALTH

Mrs. HAGAN. Mr. President, I rise in support of the Protect Women's Health From Corporate Interference Act, to stand up for what I thought was a commonly shared value—that a woman's health care decisions are between her and her doctor, not her and her boss. I thought that was well-established, straightforward—simple, even.

But it turns out that the majority of the Supreme Court thought differently when it came to certain kinds of health care decisions: whether a woman would have access to contraceptives without copays as guaranteed by Federal law. As we all know now, 2 weeks ago the Supreme Court held in Hobby Lobby that an employer's personal beliefs can trump some of the most private and significant health care decisions a woman makes.

So let me be very clear on where I stand: What kind of birth control a female employee uses is not her boss's business.

I have heard some of the supporters of the Supreme Court decision argue that ruling is a narrow ruling, and that it only applies to closely held family businesses. That doesn't tell the whole story because just 3 days after this ruling in Hobby Lobby the Court said that a nonprofit religious college didn't have to comply with a contraceptive coverage requirement even though it had already had an accommodation that allowed it to avoid paying for such coverage itself.

The majority even pointed to this accommodation in the Hobby Lobby ruling as an example of a less restrictive alternative that could be open to for-profit businesses. A few days later that same accommodation wasn't good enough.

In her dissent Justice Sotomayor wrote:

Those who are bound by our decisions usually believe that they can take us at our word. Not so today.

In other words, in less than a week the Supreme Court's conservative majority went from issuing a supposedly narrow ruling to potentially broadening it to encompass a new class of institutions. The impact of the ruling in Hobby Lobby will most definitely not be limited to those closely held businesses, as some say. I have heard others argue, in essence: Don't worry. The ruling doesn't expressly ban access to contraceptives. It just shifts the additional cost of the coverage back to the women.

But those who say erecting a barrier of cost between a woman and birth control will give her the same access she had before the decision don't understand what women have to go through to get covered and don't understand the many reasons why women use birth control. Since the coverage requirement went into effect last year, the number of women who got their birth

control without a copay jumped from 14 percent to 56 percent. That means some serious costs were avoided for many women.

The average annual savings for women last year was \$269. In total, women in the United States saved \$483 million on contraceptives, thanks to the Affordable Care Act. Among those women were 917,000 in North Carolina alone who were eligible for preventive services without additional copays. Many of these women sought and used birth control medications for reasons that had absolutely nothing to do with planning pregnancy. In fact, oral contraceptives are a key treatment for at least three major medical conditions that affect women. Polycystic ovary syndrome affects 5 to 10 percent of women of reproductive age, and if left untreated can lead to the development of ovarian cysts or infertility. In addition, 11 percent of women are affected by endometriosis in their lifetime, and 40,000 women each year are diagnosed with endometrial cancer. Many women are at risk of developing ovarian cancer—one of the most deadly cancers in the United States—and women with ovarian cancer also can receive treatment via birth control. And yes, one of the best known ways to reduce the risk of these conditions is birth control.

Employers who make their female employees pay out of pocket for contraceptives aren't just imposing their personal beliefs, they are also making it more difficult for women to access important lifesaving medical treatment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mrs. HAGAN. Mr. President, I would like to ask for another 45 seconds.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Hearing no objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. HAGAN. That is why I believe it is so important to debate and to pass the Protect Women's Health From Corporate Interference Act. This bill would fix the Hobby Lobby decision by making it illegal for any company to deny their workers specific health benefits, including birth control, that would be required to be covered. It would make clear that bosses cannot discriminate against their female workers and would ensure equal treatment under the law for tens of thousands of workers for which coverage hangs in the balance. It would preserve and codify the existing accommodation for our nonprofit religious employees.

It is troubling to me that in 2014 we are even debating women's access to contraception. Nearly all women—99 percent—will use it at some point in their lives, and they should have access to safe, effective birth control if they choose to use it—plain and simple.

This bill would ensure that those decisions about an employee's health can stay between the woman and her doctor, not between the woman and her boss. I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

Thank you, Mr. President, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

CONGO ADOPTION POLICY

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I want to talk about an issue today that transcends party lines: the humanitarian crisis we are seeing in Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In September of last year the Congo informed the United States that they would no longer issue exit visas for Congolese children who were in the process of being adopted by American parents. These are kids that have gone through the adoption process and yet the Government of the Congo says they cannot leave the country. This terrible and unjustifiable action has left hundreds of children and their families here in the United States in limbo.

Last Friday the Congolese Government announced an end to exit permit exceptions until the country passes what they deem are new adoption laws. I stand here today to express our deep concern and commitment to resolve this crisis from so many in the Senate. We have over 50 cosponsors for a resolution calling on the Congo to do the right thing. Those of us who have cosponsored this are looking for a way to help these children who have already been adopted to be reunited with their families permanently.

More than 350 families have finalized adoptions of Congolese children. They have obtained the necessary U.S. approvals, including U.S. visas authorizing their children to immigrate to the United States. There were 400 additional families in the process of completing adoptions at the time Congo imposed this moratorium. In every way that matters, including in what they feel in their hearts, these are their children.

All told, more than 800 children are caught in this diplomatic nightmare. By the way, that is about 10 percent of total adoptions worldwide by American families last year. These are international adoptions, so it is a significant number. Many of these kids have special needs, and those needs are not being met. Until they are able to come home and be with their families, those needs will not be met. In fact, some lives have been put at risk. In fact, six of these children have already died.

I had the opportunity to meet with some of the parents of some of these children and have seen some of the photos and heard some of the stories. If the Congolese Government would simply do the right thing and allow these exit permits, lives would be saved. We can't remain silent in the face of this tragedy.

Together with Senator LANDRIEU of Louisiana, I am offering a resolution calling on the administration to take action and demand that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo resume processing these adoption cases and issuing exit permits so these kids can leave. They need to

prioritize the processing of inter-country adoptions which were initiated before the suspension began.

I thank Senator LANDRIEU for her hard work on this matter, as well as 50 of our colleagues from both sides of the aisle who have joined us.

Last week I met with a number of families from Ohio, and we had the opportunity to talk about some of these kids and some of their specific circumstances. We also talked about what these families are ready to do, and they are ready to give these kids the support and love they need.

I met with the Millimans from Columbus, OH. They are adopting a little girl who has very serious medical conditions. They are in the final stages of the adoption process, and they fear they will not be able to provide her the treatment and care she needs.

I also met with the Webb family. The Webbs are in the process of adopting a child from the Congo to bring to their home in Wooster, OH. The Webbs' biological daughter Heather is also in the process of adopting from the Congo. They were both in the Capitol to talk about their kids and what they have been through.

These families represent the very best of our country and our values, a respect for these young people's lives and a commitment to live with humility, prioritizing the needs of the most vulnerable children. This diplomatic impasse is keeping these families apart. It is time the administration joined with Congress to support the families and the children involved in this crisis in every way possible.

In the coming days, I hope we will speak with one voice and demand that Congo reverse their decision and process these adoptions as quickly as possible. It is my sense this is an issue that will come up in committee this week. I hope before this session is out we will be able to take this up on the floor of the Senate, pass it, and begin to put some pressure on the Congolese Government to do the right thing. It is time to allow these children to be with their loving families.

With that, I yield back all time and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, last week I heard the majority leader speak about people who are happy with the President's health care law. While I agree that some people have been helped by the law, many Americans have been hurt by the law's destructive side effects. Republicans have given examples of people from all across the